



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



OUR COLORED PLATE.

## STUDY IN CELTIC AND MIDDLE AGE STYLES AND COLORS.

THERE will probably always exist the question between Ireland and England as to the origin of what is known as Celtic, or Christian ornamentation. Whether the early church in Ireland received its decoration from Britain, or on the other hand whether Ireland originated it, it is difficult to determine. The claim that many of the ideas may be traced to the Romans is pretty effectively disposed of by Mr. Owen Jones, who asserts that not a single Italian MSS. older than the ninth century, nor a single piece of Italian sculpture at all resembling the Celtic, can be produced; and, furthermore, that all thought of remains of Roman art existing in Ireland, may be dissipated by the fact that the Romans never visited the Island; while with the pretensions of the Scandinavians that they too were instrumental in developing the Celtic forms, the same author asserts that inasmuch as the Scandinavian relics bearing any resemblance to the Celtic, date much more recently than Britain's manuscripts showing like designs, and from the additional, although possibly not so pertinent nor direct, evidence, that missionaries from Britain were the Christianizing mediums with the Scandinavians, the conclusion naturally is rather against them. There is a trace of Danish mythology in some of the decoration, whether it be an accidental similarity or designedly so, it is rather difficult to determine. Figure A represents the lower stone from the window

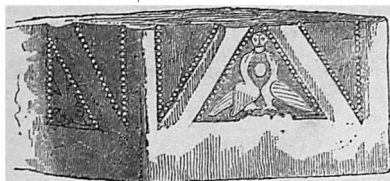


FIGURE A.—RAVENS PECKING AT A SKULL.

other hand it may be said that the raven was an Egyptian emblem of misfortune, and has been regarded by most peoples as a thing of ill omen. And to sum it all, we have nothing but the assurance of modern investigators that the intention was to represent ravens in these sculptures.

For ourselves we can find no evidence that would lead us to suppose the Irish had adapted from either the Northern or Southern peninsula; nor again does there seem to be anything to show that the Irish use of Celtic forms antedated their employment by the English.

Leaving the question of its origin out of the consideration, the beauty and uniqueness of the figures attracted an attention that soon became universal, and has exerted an influence of no little importance upon other styles. The interlacing, so very general in the Celtic, is entirely distinct in its character from the same principle of ornament employed by the Byzantine or the Moresque. The entire absence of foliage and the substitution of animal or geometrical figures, exaggerated creatures, birds, reptiles and the like, will present itself to the reader as being in direct contrast with Eastern styles. The most popular, or at any rate the most extensively used, ornament employed by artificers in metals or workers in stone was the narrow ribbon introduced in elaborate scrolls and

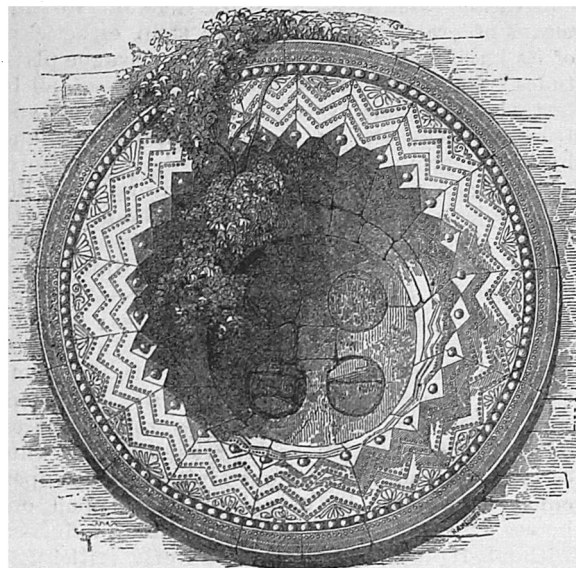
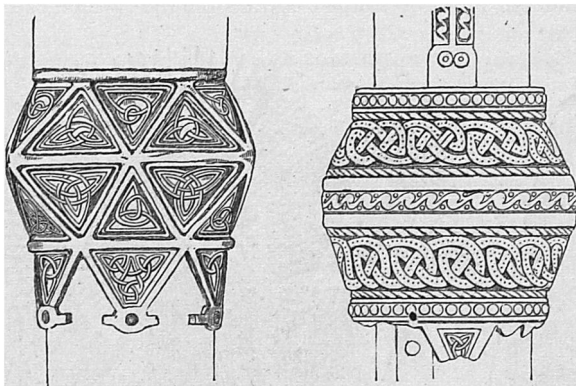


FIGURE B.—CELTIC WINDOW FROM CHURCH AT RATHAIN

knots, by turns intricate and simple, but always symmetrical and frequently geometrical. These ribbons were at times colored, and the effect was very good. This ribbon form is shown in Figure 2 of our colored plate, upon the opposite page. The border there given is a faithful reproduction of the Celtic style.

A human head was usually displayed at each corner of a capital, or in the centre of an extended panel. These heads were of a peculiar type, the beard being thick, flowing and curling, the hair of the head divided in the middle, and passing over the ear, would lose itself in a series of crazy interlacing, undistinguishable, yet graceful withal. We give in the head piece to this article a panel with this peculiar device upon it. Dr. Ledwich describes this as "exhibiting the head of a young man and a wolf, the long hair of the former elegantly entwined with the tail of the latter;" and then in a gravely jocose vein he asks attention to the propriety of thus joining hair and tail as somewhat indicative of the fondness of the man for the pursuit of the animal.

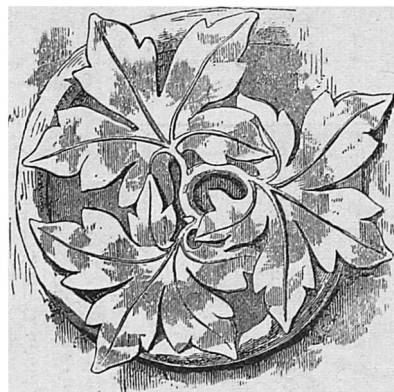


CELTIC ORNAMENTATION.—THE TRIQUETRA.

One of the noticeably curious ornamental shapes is called the *triquetra*, and is formed by the ingenious interlacing of a single line. In the creation of varieties almost endless, of this shape, the Irish artificers, as well as the scribes, found an ample field for the exercise of their fancy in design.

The upper border on Figure 1 in our colored plate will sufficiently illustrate another ornamental phase, where monstrous animals, lizards, birds and snakes were employed, their tongues extending into long, interlacing ribbons.

As an instance of chaste and picturesque ornament, we reproduce, in Figure B, an engraving of a circular window from the Church at Rathain, near Tullamore, in Kings County. The ornaments



MEDIEVAL FORM.

any further description seems unnecessary.

The Antiquity of the Celtic style is apparently indisputable, for it is made up almost exclusively of interlacings, a form characteristic and indicative of primitive thought, the first mode of diverging from the plain and ordinary that would present itself to the mind. That there was considerable ability and talent displayed in this intertwining, is unquestionable, for the unrolling of the lines is generally happy, easy and graceful, while it is always possible and logical. There must necessarily be a limit to the arrangement of these simple expedients, regardless of how beautiful they may be, and it became necessary finally for the Celtic to adopt some of the floral ideas of the Byzantine, a combination which offers to this day as beautiful and gratifying an appearance as can be desired.

The characteristic of Medieval ornamentation is floral, treated entirely in a conventional way; the leaves spring from a methodical stem, and lie about the groundwork in a stiff and unnatural manner. The acanthus leaf became a thing of the past, it was no longer known, it was obsolete. A continuous stem threw off leaves terminating in a flower.

Early English is considered the nearest to perfection, both in principle and execution, of the Gothic period. There is as much elegance and refinement in modulations of form as there is in



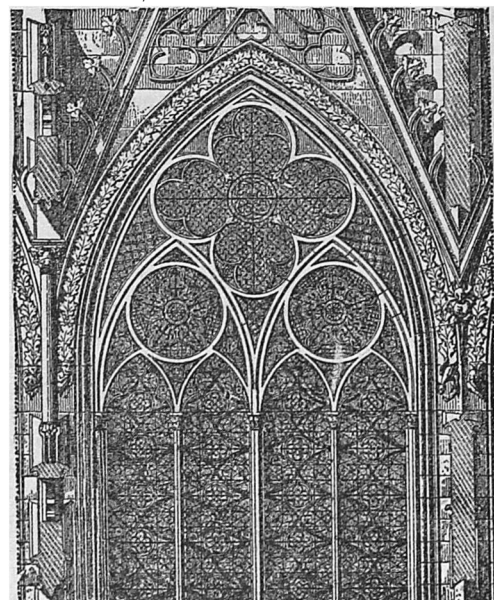
FROM NOTRE DAME, PARIS.

the ornament of the Greeks. It is always in perfect harmony with the structural features and always grows naturally from them. It fulfils every one of the conditions which we desire to find in a perfect style of Art. But it remained perfect only so long as the style remained conventional. Gradually this style became less idealized and more direct in imitation, its peculiar beauties then began to disappear, and it ceased to be an ornamentation of structural features, but merely applied ornament. Thus, when the conventional existed, the leaves sprang from a single stem; then, however, as nature was attempted and there was an effort made to follow the natural growth, the stem ceased to be the centre from which flowed all the accompanying decoration, and readily lost the grace that had theretofore been one of its charms, in an effort to imitate the softness of nature in the rigidity and permanence of stone.

The square or rectangular form, one of the phases of the Gothic, may be seen very forcibly illustrated in Figures 3 and 4 of our colored plate. The exaggerated animals on Figure 3, while they retain some few of the features of the earlier animals, are less wonderful in their conception, although equally unnatural. The armorial designs, the *fleur-de-lis*-like figures, the scalloped edges, are all peculiar to the medieval.

The natural outgrowth of this square, angular form was the Pointed, or Gothic, which reproduced the sharp corners and lengthened the angles not only in exterior but in interior ornament. Thus from the close of the XIII. century the ancient styles, some traces of which had lingered until then in the details of ornaments, entirely disappeared from architecture where the Pointed style ruled supreme. There came a great variety of arches, known by a diversity of names, all, however, controlled by the fundamental principle of a pointed form. There were the *sharply pointed*, *lanced-headed*, *stilted*, *wide*, *trefoil*, *concave* and *elliptical*.

The examples given on this page in Figures F, G and H indicate the growth and change of the pointed style, the first showing the naturalistic leaf, the second and third from Notre Dame, Paris, and the Cologne Cathedral, respectively; marking the progression of the application of the floral treatment, and in the third showing the final adoption by the Pointed of Celtic peculiarities, the intertwining and indigenous flora.



FROM THE COL. NE CATHEDRAL.





ANCIENT COLORING AND STYLES OF DECORATION APPLIED TO MODERN USES.

A Series of Studies by RAFAEL GUASTAVINO, Architect.